

REMARKS

Claims 1-31, as amended, remain herein. Claims 32-43 also remain herein, but are currently withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1, 8 and 26 have been amended. Support for the amendments may be found throughout the specification (see, e.g., FIGS 3(a) and 4; pages 27-30 and Examples 7 and 10 at pages 34 and 36 of the specification; and original claims).

1. Applicants hereby confirm their provisional election, with traverse, to prosecute the claims of Group I (claims 1-31) in the present application.

Applicants respectfully traverse the restriction requirement since the subject matter of all of claims 1-43 is sufficiently related that a thorough and complete search for the subject matter of the elected claims would necessarily encompass a thorough and complete search for the subject matter of the non-elected claims. Thus, search and examination of the entire application could be made without serious burden. See MPEP §803 which states that "[i]f the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits." This policy should apply in the present application to avoid unnecessary delay and expense to applicants and duplicative examination by the Patent Office.

2. Claims 1-7 and 26-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Rouviere FR 2 797 579 in view of Grunert et al. U.S. Patent 3,030,959.

Applicants' claims 1 and 26 recite a puncture instrument which houses a plurality of puncture needles, wherein the puncture needles are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position.

Neither Rouviere nor Grunert discloses applicants' claimed puncture needles which are connected so that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position. In the devices of Rouviere and Grunert, the puncture needles are not connected so that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position. In Rouviere, the used puncture needle is placed at the back of the device to push, not pull, the next puncture needle to the puncture position (see Rouviere at Abstract). In Grunert, a push member is used to advance the needles to the puncture position (see Grunert at column 1, lines 42-46).

Thus, neither Rouviere nor Grunert discloses all elements of applicants' claims, and neither of these references discloses anything that would have suggested applicants' claimed invention to one of ordinary skill in the art. Further, there is no disclosure or teaching in any of Rouviere, Grunert, or otherwise in this record, that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to anticipate or suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

3. Claims 8-17, 19-23 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Grunert in view of Rouviere.

Applicants' claim 8 recites a puncture needle cartridge which contains a plurality of puncture needles, wherein the puncture needles are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position.

As discussed above, neither Grunert nor Rouviere discloses applicants' claimed puncture needles which are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position.

Thus, neither Grunert nor Rouviere discloses all elements of applicants' claims, and neither of these references discloses anything that would have suggested applicants' claimed invention to one of ordinary skill in the art. Further, there is no disclosure or teaching in any of Grunert, Rouviere, or otherwise in this record, that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to anticipate or suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

4. Claim 18 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Grunert in view of Rouviere and Roe U.S. Patent Application Publication 2003/0050655.

As discussed above, neither Grunert nor Rouviere discloses applicants' claimed puncture needles which are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position.

Roe does not teach or suggest what is missing from Grunert and Rouviere. Roe says nothing about puncture needles that are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to its puncture position.

Thus, none of Grunert, Rouviere, and Roe discloses all elements of applicants' claims, and none of these references discloses anything that would have suggested applicants' claimed invention to one of ordinary skill in the art. Further, there is no disclosure or teaching in any of Grunert, Rouviere, Roe, or otherwise in this record that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to anticipate or suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

5. Claim 24 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Grunert in view of Rouviere and Christensen U.S. Patent 3,898,009.

As discussed above, neither Grunert nor Rouviere discloses applicants' claimed puncture needles which are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to the puncture position.

Christensen does not teach or suggest what is missing from Grunert and Rouviere. Christensen says nothing about puncture needles that are connected in such a manner that removal of a puncture needle pulls the next puncture needle to its puncture position. Instead, Christensen discloses a plurality of writing cartridges which are moved by removing an individual cartridge from the front of a tubular member and reinserting it in the back of the tubular member to allow the individual cartridges to slide towards the front (see Christensen at column 3, lines 11-16).

Thus, none of Grunert, Rouviere, and Christensen discloses all elements of applicants' claims, and none of these references discloses anything that would have suggested applicants' claimed invention to one of ordinary skill in the art. Further, there is no disclosure or teaching in any of Grunert, Rouviere, Christensen, or otherwise in this record that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to anticipate or suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

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For all the foregoing reasons, all claims 1-31 are now proper in form and patentably distinguished over all grounds of rejection cited in the Office Action. The PTO is hereby authorized to charge or credit any necessary fees to Deposit Account No. 19-4293. Should the Examiner deem that any further amendments would be desirable in placing this application in even better condition for issue, he is invited to telephone applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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